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A-B team

SSCI

77-0146/28

SSCI Report

NIE-B Team Episode

on Soviet Strategic Capabilities and Objectives

Major findings of report:

NIE's on Soviet strategic capabilities and objectives have been and continue to be deficient in a number of respects.

B Team made a number of valid and useful criticisms of the NIE's but on balance undercut that contribution by reflecting the views of only one segment of the spectrum of opinion, and by not preventing leakage of these sensitive materials to the press.

Present system of producing NIE's on Soviet strategic is not likely to materially improve existing NIE deficiencies and needs major changes.

The report offers recommendations concerning such improvement.

Purpose:

A critique of the principal judgments and conduct of both the NIE and the Team B report. Note: no attempt is made to judge which group estimates concerning the USSR are correct.

Summary and Recommendations

Facts of the Case:

Motivation for the B Team experiment in competitive analyses grew out of the alarm with which the PFIAB viewed recent NIE's on Soviet strategic weapons strength which projected "a sense of complacency unsupported by the facts."

PFIAB recommended to the President that he authorize the NSC to implement competitive analyses of subsequent net assessments and then an independent critique of such net assessments.

By 8 June 1976 ground rules for the experiment had been worked out. Though DCI Bush played an important role in the subsequent NIE B Team episode, the experiment was essentially one of PFIAB initiation and design.

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The B team arguments caused the intelligence community analysts to reexamine their own previous NIE judgments. But the CIA and State did not adopt a more pessimistic view of Soviet intentions. Their estimates "raised the question" about whether the Soviet leaders were seeking strategic superiority. The Team B report flatly holds that "superiority" is the basic Soviet objective and proceeds from there.

Critique:

The Committee found that the community began to correct its estimates in 1970 but that they still contained weaknesses. The reason for this was a failure to call upon the best qualified experts outside the community or to subject NIE judgments to analysis from such outside sources.

There were weaknesses in the Team B report also according to the Committee. For example it exhibits preconception, is inadequate on the crucial question of Soviet contentions, fails to acknowledge more somber NIE's of recent years.

Both reports and the government in general reflect a lack of a thorough and objective net assessment of US and USSR strategic power and trends.

Findings:

B Team because it was "hard line" in its approach was not as constructive as one with a more dispassionate view would have been.

Leaks from the Team reduced its contribution.

The Agency and the community are preoccupied with Soviet weaponry and are concerned with the total causes of Soviet behavior.

There is no one agreed upon US intelligence position to the question of reasons for Soviet conduct in strategic weapons development.

There is a need to improve the system of producing national estimates.

Policymakers are faced with an extraordinary problem which calls for an extraordinary remedy.

Recommendations:

National estimating best done by widely representatives highly skilled, broadly experienced body.

Need for competence and alternative analysis.

Need to tailor NIE's for various policymakers.

Newly constituted estimative body headed by scholar or diplomat include some senior intelligence officers, but mostly composed of new blood.

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Convene ad hoc bodies for special complex questions.

Improve editorial standards.

Estimates should present facts differences in judgment rather than a consensus.

Highlight significant changes from previous estimates.

Define strategic matters more comprehensively

Need for sophisticated objective and explicit net assessments to complete the estimative process searching and candid postmortems.

Continuous contact with policymakers throughout estimative process.

A new estimative body is needed the Committee said because the changes required cannot be accomplished within the CIA Intelligence Community organization. It might be given national level downtown, close to policymakers. It would attract best outside experts.

Problem not just with NIE's but with entire stream of estimates and analytical support provided to policymakers - improvement in quality of intelligence reporting will result in larger and more constructive need for intelligence.

DCI should supplement NIE procedure by contributing to a more informed and orderly public debate about Soviet military strength and objectives. He showed review intelligence product to see what information could safely be released to enrich public debate.

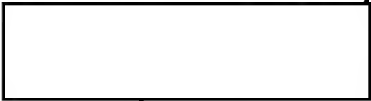
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6/25/77

To OLC staffers

Done 27

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a good summary of
SSCI report on the
A Team / B Team ex-
cise. I recommend
that you all read
it for background
info.



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